

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 12785 01 OF 02 291652Z
ACTION SP-02

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 SS-15 SSO-00 /018 W
-----090870 300835Z /12-R

O 291632Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7557
INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 12785

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, EAID, EFIN, CG, BE
SUBJECT: ZAIRE UPDATE: BELGIAN DEVELOPMENTS AND VIEWS

REF: STATE 160029

1. SUMMARY. JOINT BELGO-ZAIRE DISTRIBUTION ARRANGEMENT FOR EMERGENCY FOOD AID HAS BEEN WORKED OUT JUNE 29 IN LUBUMBASHI. FIRST BELGIAN PLANE LOAD OF FOOD IS ALREADY AT KAMINA AND DISTRIBUTION, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF BELGIAN TROOPS IN SHABA, IS TO BEGIN IMMEDIATELY. THESE SAME BELGIAN PLANES WILL BEGIN THE RETROGRADE MOVEMENT TO BELGIUM OF THE REST OF BELGIAN PARATROOPS IN ZAIRE, WITH LAST BELGIAN SOLDIER TO BE HOME ON OR BEFORE JULY 10. THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT DECIDED TO PROVIDE EMERGENCY FOOD AND MEDICAL AID WITHOUT LINKAGE TO GOZ REFORM BECAUSE OF BELGIUM'S "SPECIAL PROBLEM": NAMELY FEAR THAT FAMINE AND INSTABILITY COULD TRIGGER AN "EXPLOSION" THAT WOULD PUT INTO DANGER 25,000 BELGIANS RESIDENT IN ZAIRE. FURTHER BELGIAN ASSISTANCE TO BE LINKED TO GOZ ECONOMIC REFORMS; BUT POLITICAL REFORMS ARE ANOTHER QUESTION. END SUMMARY.
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PAGE 02 BRUSSE 12785 01 OF 02 291652Z

2. BELGIAN EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE - BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S DEPUTY CHEF DE CABINET ANDRE ONKELINX TOLD US AFTERNOON JUNE 29 THAT FIRST MILITARY PLANE LOAD OF EMERGENCY FOOD HAD ARRIVED IN KAMINA AND THAT DISTRIBUTION IN SHABA WAS TO BEGIN IMMEDIATELY. HE SAID THAT TWO OTHER PLANE LOADS FOR BAS ZAIRE HAD

ALREADY ARRIVED IN KINSHASA. BELGIAN CONSUL GENERAL IN LUBUMBASHI HAD JUST REPORTED THAT A BELGO-ZAIRE COORDINATING COMMISSION HAD BEEN SET UP IN LUBUMBASHI AND THAT THE FIRST MEETING WHICH WAS HELD THIS MORNING HAD GONE OFF WITHOUT HITCH AND THAT DISTRIBUTION WAS TO BEGIN IMMEDIATELY.

3. ONKELINX SAID THAT BELGIANS WANTED THEIR TROOPS IN SHABA TO HELP WITH THE JOINT DISTRIBUTION EFFORT, BOTH FOR EFFICIENCY AND IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT FOOD SUPPLIES GET TO THE PEOPLE AND ARE NOT DIVERTED. HE SAID THAT BBC GOT WIND OF BELGIAN PLAN TO USE TROOPS AND HAD BROADCAST THIS INFORMATION, WHICH UPSET MOBUTU, WHO ONKELINX CHARACTERIZED AS "TOUCHY" FOLLOWING THE DEMARCHES ON REFORM OF THE FIVE AND CRITICAL INTERNATIONAL PRESS PLAY
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BRUSSE 12785 01 OF 02 291652Z

ON HIS REGIME. MOBUTU CALLED IN BELGIAN AMBASSADOR RITTWEGER JUNE 28 AND RITTWEGER SUBSEQUENTLY TELEGRAPHED THE RECOMMENDATION THAT BELGIAN TROOPS NOT BE USED IN THE FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROCESS. ONKELINX SAID THAT THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT THEN DECIDED THAT THE CONSUL GENERAL IN LUBUMBASHI BE INSTRUCTED TO WORK OUT A DISTRIBUTION ARRANGEMENT WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES WHICH WOULD INCLUDE "SOME" PARTICIPATION BY BELGIAN TROOPS, WHO WOULD BE KEPT IN THE BACKGROUND. ALTHOUGH AMBASSADOR RITTWEGER HAS BEEN GIVEN VETO POWER OVER USE OF BELGIAN TROOPS, HE HAS NOT EXERCISED IT SO FAR. THEREFORE, THE DISTRIBUTION IS TO BEGIN IMMEDIATELY.

4. BELGIAN TROOP WITHDRAWAL - ONKELINX SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED THAT ALL BELGIAN TROOPS SHOULD BE OUT OF SHABA AND HOME IN BELGIUM NOT LATER THAN JULY 10. FOR REASONS OF ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY, THE BELGIAN PLANES THAT OFF-LOAD EMERGENCY FOOD AND MEDICINES IN SHABA WILL BRING BACK TROOPS. AS THE LAST PLANE IS CURRENTLY SCHEDULED TO LEAVE BELGIUM FOR ZAIRE ON JULY 5, ALL TROOPS COULD BE BACK BEFORE THE JULY 10 TARGET DATE. HE SAID THAT BELGIAN TROOPS ARE CURRENTLY AT LUBUMBASHI,

KOLWEZI AND KAMINA. HE ADDED THAT MILITARY PLANNERS ARE PREPARING CONTINGENCY PLANS IN THE EVENT THAT THERE IS A SOCIAL OR POLITICAL EXPLOSION IN ZAIRE WHICH WOULD REQUIRE SENDING BELGIAN TROOPS TO RESCUE THE 25,000 BELGIAN CITIZENS THERE.

5. ASSISTANCE LINKED TO REFORM - CHEF DE CABINET ALFRED CAHEN TOLD POLICY PLANNING DIRECTOR ANTHONY LAKE, DURING JUNE 23 POLICY PLANNING TALKS IN BRUSSELS, THAT FEAR OF POSSIBLE EXPLOSION AND VULNERABILITY OF BELGIANS IN ZAIRE WAS THE REASON THAT BELGIUM DIFFERED WITH THE U.S. ON "TACTICS" IN LINKING AID TO REFORM AND WAS GOING AHEAD IMMEDIATELY WITH EMERGENCY FOOD AND MEDICINE SHIPMENTS. CAHEN REPEATED THE SAME MESSAGE JUNE 27 TO NSC STAFFER
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PAGE 04 BRUSSE 12785 01 OF 02 291652Z

ROBERT HUNTER. IN RESPONSE TO LAKE'S QUESTION, CAHEN SAID THAT IF MOBUTU WERE TO REFUSE TO IMPLEMENT AGREED UPON REFORMS, THEN BELGIUM WOULD HOLD UP ON FURTHER AID.

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 12785 02 OF 02 300819Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BRUSSELS 12785

CAHEN INDICATED TO BOTH LAKE AND HUNTER, AND ONKELINX MADE IT MORE EXPLICIT TODAY, THAT BELGIANS VIEW IMPLEMENTATION OF ECONOMIC REFORMS AS LITMUS TEST OF FURTHER AID, AND LEFT RATHER FLEXIBLE THE QUESTION OF

POLITICAL REFORMS. FOR BOTH CAHEN AND ONKELINX, THE MOMENT OF TRUTH IS GOING TO COME IN AUGUST, WHEN THE IMF-APPOINTED DIRECTOR IS IN PLACE IN THE CENTRAL BANK, AND ALONG COMES UNCLE LITHO AND ASKS FOR SOME FOREIGN EXCHANGE FOR SOME WORTHY PROJECT AND GETS A "NO" FOR AN ANSWER. IF MOBUTU DOES NOT BACK UP THE BANK DIRECTOR AT THAT POINT, "IT IS FINISHED", AS CAHEN TOLD LAKE. ONKELINX ALSO STRESSED TO US IMPORTANCE OF SUCCESSFUL IMF AGREEMENT.

6. AS FOR POLITICAL REFORM, CAHEN TOLD LAKE THAT MOBUTU HAD "GOT THE MESSAGE" FROM THE FIVE AND ADDED THAT WE WERE ASKING "SOME DIFFICULT THINGS" OF HIM. IN RESPONSE TO OUR QUESTIONS, ONKELINX WAS MORE PRECISE ABOUT POLITICAL REFORMS. HE SAW "NO CHANCE" FOR MOBUTU'S AMNESTY BEING IMPLEMENTED BECAUSE EXILES WILL NOT RETURN TO ZAIRE AND THEIR OPPOSITION TO MOBUTU WILL CONTINUE (BELGIUM-BASED OPPOSITION GROUPS' REACTION TO AMNESTY OFFER BEING CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BRUSSE 12785 02 OF 02 300819Z

REPORTED SEPTTEL). ON QUESTION OF POSSIBLE INCLUSION OF REGIONAL LEADERS IN ZAIRIAN GOVERNMENT, ONKELINX THOUGHT THAT MOBUTU MIGHT BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING IN THAT AREA. HE WAS LESS OPTIMISTIC THAT MOBUTU COULD SWALLOW HIS PRIDE AND MOVE TOWARDS IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS WITH ANGOLA, BUT HE DID NOT RULE OUT THIS POSSIBILITY. DE TARR

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